

Texas SOS: Elections and Voter ID Law Going Smoothly

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Voter turnout is exceeding expectations this election cycle.

Today, the Texas Secretary of State John Steen came to Midland to get the word out about the new Voter ID requirements.

"We haven't had any issues to speak of. It's gone very smoothly," he said.

So far so good for Ector County Elections Administrator Mitzi Sheible, too.

"I'm very pleased," Sheible said. "I'm always pleased when it goes nice and smooth and there's no problems."

Elections are running smoothly and exceeding expectations on voter turnout.

"This year we have exceeded our 2011 turnout for early voting," Sheible said, "so that's a positive thing."

Statewide, in the first five days of early voting, 139,205 people cast ballots.

Compare that to the last constitutional amendment election in 2011 when 59,095 people voted in the first week.

Before you vote you'll need one of the sever approved IDs. Those include a Texas driver license, personal ID card, concealed handgun license or election identification certificate - all issued by DPS. Also accepted are a U.S. passport, citizenship certificate or a military photo ID.

Election officials say the purpose of the Voter ID law is to crack down on voter fraud.

But it's not without controversy.

David Rosen, the chairman of the Midland County Democratic party, said, "Quite honestly I think it was done by the legislature to suppress voting."

Will Hailer, the Executive Director of the Texas Democratic Party, agrees.

"I think the Secretary of State today really has it wrong," Hailer said Monday.

One of Hailer's concerns is that only a limited number of DPS offices are open on Saturdays to issue election identification certificates.

"It's a real accessibility issue across the state even here in Midland-Odessa to make sure people can get an EIC if they don't have any other form of ID," Hailer said.

Secretary Steen reports DPS has issued about 50 EIC's statewide. Twenty more are in process. DPS has received nearly one thousand inquiries about the election identification certificates.

"We need to have policies across the state that make voting easier for people because it's our constitutional right to be able to do that," Hailer argued. "Unfortunately, Republicans in Austin just continue to make it harder and harder on

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seniors, on women, on communities of color and we need to change that."

Secretary Steen points back to the numbers.

"We're more than doubling the voter turnout right now so that might tell you something about whether this is inhibiting voter turnout," Steen said.

"It's the law of Texas and I'm trying to get everybody to work together to make sure it goes as smooth as possible."

There are opportunities this week to obtain an election identification certificate outside of DPS.

In Midland, you can go to the Midland County Annex building at 2110 N A Street on October 30 and 31.

In Odessa, you can visit the Ector County Courthouse Annex at 1010 E. 8th Street on October 30 and 31.

For more information on elections:

Texas Secretary of State
<http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/index.shtml>

Ector County voting information
http://www.co.ector.tx.us/default.aspx?Ector_County/Elections

Midland County voting information
<http://www.co.midland.tx.us/departments/elections/Pages/Election-Results.aspx>

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Australian star nearly thrown out of US Open (<http://www.givemesport.com/498184-nick-kyrgios-nearly-thrown-out-of-us-open>) (GiveMeSport)

The Atomic Bomb Picture Is Pretty Scary: 14 Other Photos That Are Finally Colorful (<http://viewmixed.com/ever-wonder-what-the-past-looked-like-in-color-check-out-these-15-photos/6680>) (ViewMixed)

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Big 2 Community Calendar- 8.12.2014 (http://www.permianbasin360.com/story/d/story/big-2-community-calendar-8122014/20872/3tCmLc6m1EWwj_er5L7D3A)

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